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diminishing, although very slowly, liberating the people's social life from religious control.

If the people were obedient before to all regulations and orders of the attendants of the sanctuaries, executing their orders readily and without any hesitation for fear of the supernatural power of the *Khati*, gradually they have begun to dare to disobey the oppression of religion and to seek the protection of government officials. This fact is clearly pictured in the information given by R. D. Eristov, who was himself for two years the head of the administration governing the district occupied by the Khevsurs, the Pshavs and the Tushes.

"Once there came to the head of the district administration," writes Eristov,[48] "a Pshav with a petition to unbind him. Such a request surprised us and at the same time made us laugh, because the Pshav was not bound at all, but he soon explained to us the meaning of his petition, as follows: When the *dekanozis*[1] visiting the defile came to the village where the Pshav lives, he was not at home and naturally he could not meet them with the necessary and customary presents. Because of this the *dekanozis* hung a silver cup upon a tree and with this they 'bound' the man; that is, they put upon him the following prohibitions: that nobody be permitted to talk with him; that nobody be allowed to lend him anything; and finally they forbade him to take part in the religious and social gatherings until he paid the enormous fine imposed upon him. But as the poor Pshav was unable to pay even a fourth of the requested indemnity, he was petitioning to be unbound (set free) from the payment of the fine imposed upon him."

In the beginning of this chapter[2] we mentioned the Georgian Highlanders' belief in the existence of spirits and life beyond the grave. Their belief in spirits and their cult of the dead represent the fundamental and principal part of their religion. The Georgian Highlanders believe that death does not signify the end of life, but on the contrary the deceased continues to live beyond the grave, and the manner of their life and the necessities of their existence are the same as those of people living on the earth.

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[48] Eristov: 134.

[1] [a priest; see cat. 116, pp. 40-41, 2956. -- Analyst]

[2] [cat. 116, p. 1956 -- Analyst]

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They can be hungry, thirsty, angry; they may be pleased or provoked. At death a person does not cease to be a member of his family. Every family has to take care of its dead, see that they are not hungry or neglected. The living and dead members of a family reciprocally assist each other. The living carry food and comfort to the dead, and in return for these efforts the dead protect and assist their living kinsmen in their struggle for life as good spirits. But if forgotten, they become angry and avenge their neglect by sending evil and every kind of mischief upon the living members of their families; then they become the dreaded evil spirits. Thus the Georgians of Samurzakan[49] believe that "the souls of the dead, being displeased with someone of their living relatives, come to their herds and kill the animals, and when embittered they may even slay the proprietors. In order to avoid this, the living sacrifice goats and sheep and bring the choicest food to the graves of dead relatives who they have reason to think may be dissatisfied, imploring them not to come to them in dreams or in reality." This interrelation between the living and the dead in the matter of reciprocal help is not an artificially made theory, but represents one of the basic factors upon which rests the whole social life of the living people. This reciprocity is demonstrated in every phase of social life: in the customs connected with birth, marriage, funerals, blood-feuds, etc.

The result of these beliefs in regard to the souls of the dead was the development of the cult of dead ancestors, which in turn is responsible for the existence of the cult of the common ancestor, who, as generally believed, is the head and founder of the community, its protector and benefactor.

Every adherent to this cult is regarded as kin, even if he is just an adopted stranger, provided he has followed the procedure established by custom, which consists of bringing a sacrifice to the communal *Khati*, followed by a general feast representing the sacramental consumption of the sacrificed animal. Through this procedure the adopted is regarded as a devotee of the cult and a full-fledged member of the community.

[1 [i.e. of the dead; see ref. 11c, pp 42-43 -- Analyst]

[49] Machavariani, D., and Bartolomei, I.A.: 82.

[2 [i.e. sanctuary; see ref. 11c, p 25 ff -- Analyst]

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These beliefs of the people in the existence of spirits and in life beyond the grave explain the existence and meaning of many customs practiced by the Georgian Highlanders. Thus, for example, the Tushes believe that the soul of the deceased continues to live among his relatives,[50] that the soul needs food and drink, like every human being, and therefore during dinner and supper a portion of the food is put aside for the satisfaction of his hunger. The relatives must take good care of all the needs of the souls of their dead, because of his ability to bring good and evil to the relatives according to the veneration shown to him.

"The world beyond the grave is known by the Tushes under the name of *suleti*, meaning 'the place of souls,' from the Georgian word *suli*, meaning soul. At its entrance sit the stern judges who receive the deceased and with sharp scissors cut two or three hairs from their heads. The *suleti* consists of two parts: paradise and hell. Between them flows a stormy and fiery river of pitch. Over the river is a bridge made of one human hair. The righteous pass over the bridge in safety, but the sinners fall into the fire."

So long as the family exists, the dead can count upon it to support their needs, but if a family dies out its dead roam hungry and homeless for all eternity. This belief explains the dread which the Georgian Highlanders have of remaining without children, who will take care of their dead parents. Male children are particularly desired, not only because they are regarded as defenders of family interests in blood-feuds and supporters of the tradition, but also because they represent security and comfort for their parents after death, in their life beyond the grave, which explains the existence of the custom of the husband divorcing a sterile wife and taking another—with the first wife's permission if she has borne only female children. The same phenomenon accounts for the practice of the custom of the adoption of the son-in-law, known in the Georgian language as *zedsidze*, and, lacking a son-in-law, the adoption of a stranger—to have a posterity who will take care of dead parents.

The belief in spirits explains the custom of putting aside a portion of food at every feast or at ordinary meals for dead

[50] Khakhanov: a, 50-1.

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members of the family. This custom existed not only among the Svans and Khevsurs in the secluded Alpine communities, but also among the cultured Lowlanders, who generally observed the habit of dipping a piece of bread in a glass of wine at the beginning of a meal, with these words: *"Ghmerto atskone mati suli,"* meaning in English: "Lord, bless Thy souls." I saw this custom observed everywhere in Georgia, and have often been present at meals when this prayer was said.

Besides the custom of supplying the dead with food, the attitude toward the deceased and the belief in life beyond the grave are clearly expressed in the custom of having a special holiday dedicated to the memory of the dead, which is called *sulta dghe*, meaning "the day of the souls," from the Georgian words *suli* (soul) and *dghe* (day).

Thus the Svans,[51] in admitting the bodily existence of the dead in the life beyond the grave, are convinced also of the urgent necessity of supplying them with food and drink, and therefore at their commemorative feasts they try to outdo their neighbors by preparing tables covered with meat, bread and brandy, with a view to please the dead. The Svans believe that the souls of the dead return to their earthly kinsmen periodically every year, usually for a whole week beginning with the day of manifestation of Our Lord (Epiphany). They try hard to be ready for this day; they clean and scrub their houses, tables, chairs, wash plates and dishes, and prepare exquisite food.

This Svan custom of entertaining the visiting dead may be described as follows:[52] On the eve of the day of the Baptism of Our Lord the Svans prepare themselves with great zeal for the reception and entertainment of the dead. On this day they clean and wash all vessels and furniture in the house, believing that the dead may get angry at something and curse the whole family. They fast the whole day and evening; they bake many kinds of bread, prepare the lent (*nocque*) food and put it on the long tables, filling the cups with brandy (*araki*), and light the cereous candles. The brandy and candles are placed at the end of the table. Then all

[51] Gulbiani: 89.
[52] Margiani: 84-6.

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members of the family except the eldest hide themselves in corners of the room, because at this time, according to their belief, the souls of dead members of their family arrive for supper. After a period of general silence, the eldest in the family approaches the table, takes a cup of brandy, and, kneeling, addresses the invisible guests in these words: *"Khochav lakun parkh sablu chis madil perikh nom Khimpavrald; mai latial patskh martskhs nakabunad. Chiv shvendba parkh."* This passage may be translated into English thus: "May all of you unfortunates have peace. We ask you not to be angry at us; protect us as much as possible from ill luck. May there be eternal memory for all of you!"

Afterward the old man asks the dead not to harm him and to grant to himself and his family long life, for the Svans believe that the soul of a dead person may bestow a blessing or ill fortune. While the old man is addressing his unseen guests, one of the members of the family plays on the *chunir* (a stringed musical instrument resembling the guitar). This scene lasts about twenty minutes, sometimes longer. Then the whole family sit down to supper, after which they do not go to bed but pass the night in vigilance. They tell stories in turn, play on the *chunir*, dance, etc. The fire is not extinguished but is kept burning the whole night through in order that the guests from the other world will not be cold. This entertainment of the dead continues from the evening of the day of the Baptism of Our Lord (starting Saturday evening) till the second Monday. This week is known to the Svans as *lipanal*, meaning "to prepare the table for the dead." During the whole of this time no one is permitted to work, not even to cut wood, which is consequently accumulated and stored beforehand.

Early Monday morning the tables are prepared with meat and bread, for the last meal of the dead. All members of the family hide themselves in corners of the room and the eldest approaches the table and says to the invisible guests: "May the Lord forgive you your sins and give you eternal peace . . ." etc. Then he breaks up all the bread into small pieces, cuts off a few morsels of meat and puts it all on a small round table. He fills the cups with brandy, lights the candles, prays to the souls, and carries the

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table out into the yard. This indicates that the souls of the dead are now leaving the house and saying good-bye to the family. After all this is over, the children gather together. They make a wooden cross, fix the lighted candles upon it, and visit one neighbor after another, singing the special chant for the event:

"Kriste Pusd, Khamvai ishgvid lungjaz quin lapkhurna endji lakhkhurin al korash metsvlabrmi lakun, jamen!"

Translated into English, this song is as follows:

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, as Thou gave peace to the soul of the seven-weeks-old child, likewise give peace to the souls of the dead of this house. Amen!"

For this service the children receive presents, mostly food.

The belief in such material needs for the dead as food and drink is also clearly indicated in the custom of the Khevsurs and Svans of a person arranging his own funeral ceremonies and feast during his lifetime.

The Svans think[53] that all expenses for funerals and commemorative services for the dead are for the benefit of deceased souls. They believe that the amount of such expenses are in proportion to God's forgiveness of the sins of the dead, for which forgiveness the grown-up people stand in greater need than the children. Therefore, the funeral expenses for the latter are usually small. It also often happens that a childless old couple, having no hope that anyone will arrange elaborate funerals for them after their death, make such preparations during their own lifetime.

The Svans also believe that the soul of the deceased continues to live in the same house for a whole year after death and has the same material needs as a living person.[54] Therefore, during this year a portion of dinner and supper, a pipe with tobacco, and brandy (*araki*) are placed in a dark corner of the room for this soul. All this is consumed afterward by the children. In the life beyond the grave the soul asks God for a better life than it had upon earth. Therefore, the commemorative services for the dead

[53] Margiani: 81.
[54] Teptsov: 60.

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769 are of great importance; they give pleasure to the souls here on earth. But if such services are not arranged, the soul becomes an enemy of the house and may send mischief. In order to prevent this, many people arrange their own commemorative services while still alive. The entire village, and sometimes even the whole community, is assembled for this occasion. The person about to die puts on his best clothes and eats and drinks as much as he can. The people cry and wail, recite his deeds, kiss his clothes, etc. . . . In a word, they do everything exactly as if it were a real funeral ceremony. The living-dead observes those who appear to be most devoted to him, with the thought that after his death his soul may bring happiness to all who love him. The ceremony ends with a general feast.

[774] The Khevsurs also have this custom of living people arranging their own funerals, differing from the Svans in that the Khevsur is not present at his own funeral celebration, but listens to the wailing and crying of his neighbors in an adjoining room.

775 The manner of the interpretation and representation of the soul of the dead by the Georgians in general is pictured in the custom of catching the soul of a drowned person from the river, as it is practiced by the Georgians of Samursaken,[35] and with local variations in details by their neighbors, the Abkhazians.

The soul of the drowned person remains, according to popular belief among the Georgians of Samurzakan, in the river for fifteen days and roams under the water in the vicinity of the place where the tragedy occurred. The relatives of the drowned person are anxious to find someone who is a professional expert at enticing souls out of the water and catching them. For this purpose the soul-catchers take a skin bag called *guda* to the open mouth of which is affixed a silver thread, and two men drag it upstream from the banks to the middle of the river, beginning about seven hundred feet above the spot where the corpse was found. The soul-catchers have in their hands musical instruments similar to violins, and to their monotonous accompaniment they sing: "Soul, soul! Come out of the water. Soul, soul! Fly into the skin." The soul must come out of the water and enter the skin through

[35] Machavariani and Bartolomei.

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entrance door of the home of the dead man is placed a table, where a man, with a few assistants, writes down the names of the visitors and their gifts. I have observed many such occurrences in Megrelia. Everyone, with the exception of children, must register his name and give something. This is done so as to assure the donor of similar assistance if his home should be stricken with the same calamity. Everyone helping another in such a case is sure to be helped himself on a similar occasion. In the Georgian province of Guria in times past the villagers brought to the families stricken with death,—flour, cheese, wine, beans, and in more recent times, with the stabilization of monetary system in Georgia, money was given, which consisted of from ten to thirty kopeks given by neighbors, and from one to ten rubles by relatives. Here also, as in Megrelia, the names and gifts are recorded on a special list. The monetary offering is called in Guria *tsasaburavi,* meaning "covering," or "for covering." On the other hand, the help with things of nature, as mentioned, is called *shesatseri,* meaning "offering."[24] The custom of reciprocal help in such cases is regarded by the Georgians of Guria as obligatory, and if anyone, for example in the district of Lanchkuti, did not fulfill this requirement, he was regarded with distrust by everyone.[25] In the same way as among the Georgians of Guria and Megrelia, the custom of mutual assistance is practiced by other groups of the Georgian nation. Among the Georgians of Ratcha, for example, the family of the deceased is given an offering called *shesatseravi,* consisting of from twenty pounds to two puds of corn for bread, or from twenty-seven to forty-five loaves of baked bread. Others bring wine, beans, etc. The relatives help with money, everyone giving from forty kopeks to two rubles. This monetary help is called *sapeni.* The name of the donor and the gift are recorded, as among the Georgians of Guria and Megrelia.

Among the Khevsurs, during the annual commemoration of the dead, all relatives of the deceased come together, even from the outlying villages, and everyone brings a quantity of brandy, consisting of two or three *thungi,* the equivalent of from ten to

[24] Mamaladze: 83.
[25] Keresclidze: 236.

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fifteen bottles.[26] Among the Svans, for the commemoration ceremonies for the dead, the relatives of the deceased person bring, from every home, thirty small loaves of bread, called *lekhde*. These loaves are for consumption during the feast;[27] or the Svans,[28] before the commemoration celebration, visit all the relatives and collect the necessary supplies for the feast.

From the examples given in this chapter, we notice that in every group and community is found a clearly marked group solidarity expressed in reciprocal assistance and co-operation. We see that this phenomenon is evident not only in the field and home work, but is manifested by all groups of the Georgian nation —by Highlanders and Lowlanders alike, in every manner of life, in the customs connected with childbirth as well as in wedding ceremonies and funerals, and in time of danger everyone finds protection and refuge among his kinsmen. The last mentioned fact is clearly illustrated in the customs of blood-feud, where every offender is supported by his relatives; on the other hand, kinsmen of the victim seek redress and punishment of the culprit. In conclusion, we may admit that the social life of the communities among the Georgian Highlanders is based on a complex of customs, clearly defined and enforced by the group, co-ordinating and regulating the social and individual life of the people, creating between the members interdependence and symmetry of action, reciprocity with security, where every assistance is accordingly returned and repaid.

[see cat. III6 p. 162 ff. -- Analyst]

[26] Radde: d, 87.
[27] Eristov: b, 41.
[28] Stoinav: 439.

C. G. 793 hereditary rights. The priest, called khevis beri "elder of the valley," khutsi "priest" or dek'anozi "dean," pronounced the ceremonial C. G. [782] prayers and sacrificed the sheep and cows offered as victims. The kadagi or dzhvaris C. G. [791] meene "interpreter," "tongue of the dzhvari," a kind of shaman, pronounced the will of the khat'i. The medroshe "standard bearer" or khat'is pekhi "foot of the khat'i" carried the sacred banner (drosha) on festive days. A special functionary attended to the brewing of the sacred beer, a custom borrowed from the C. G. [796] Ossetes. The beer was drunk at the annual festivals which were attended by all the "serfs" of the khat'i.

In Svanetia the functions of the Khevsur khevis beri were performed by priests not regularly ordained and without any theological training; they were called bap (from Greek C. G. [771] pappas). The numerous ancient churches were neglected and were only used for storing the vessels, vestments and books relating to the divine service; these were jealously C. G. 796 guarded from alienation. Many originally Christian feasts and Saint's days were celebrated with prayers, drinking of home-made brandy and eating of sacrificed animals and C. G. [769] fancy bread of different traditional shapes. Similar rites were observed on the commemoration days of the dead which were performed at fixed intervals.